

Washington Whispers

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Will Kissinger Be Next? ... Barnstorming Plans For Reagan ... Doubts About a Politician at CIA

The view that Henry A. Kissinger emerged a big winner in the White House power struggle is not universally shared. Speculation is that President Ford may well dispense with his Secretary of State before the '76 election. Pretext for Mr. Kissinger's exit would be that congressional interference makes it impossible for him to pursue an effective foreign policy.

Choice of Donald Rumsfeld as Secretary of Defense is being defended on the ground that he will be every bit as much a hard-liner as the departing James Schlesinger. Says one Rumsfeld backer: "Anyone who knows him knows he isn't timid. He'll have just as many differences with Henry Kissinger as Schlesinger had."

White House insiders expect Robert Hartmann, the President's long-time associate and top speech writer, to try for a comeback now that Mr. Rumsfeld is leaving the White House. Mr. Hartmann had been sidetracked. Betting is that Mr. Hartmann will now share the real power with Richard Cheney, the new chief of staff, and John Marsh, another trusted presidential adviser.

Nelson Rockefeller's decision to bow out as Vice President after this term—as a way of removing himself from the political squabbles—strengthens the hand of Gerald Ford's campaign manager, Howard ("Bo") Callaway, who was first to say on the record that the Vice President was a political liability.

Former Governor Ronald Reagan now plans a formal announcement of his candidacy during the week of November 17, to be followed by a barnstorming trip to important primary States, — and an appearance in Washington, D.C.—ending back in California.

Although he still harbors White House hopes, Democrat Edmund Muskie is busy keeping his fences mended back home in Maine. He expects a challenge for his Senate seat from youthful William Cohen, the Republican Representative who won national attention during the Watergate hearings.

Doubts are already being expressed that a Democratic Senate will approve George Bush as new head of the CIA. While he is held in high esteem personally, his opponents insist that what is needed at CIA is a "professional" and not a partisan politician. Mr. Bush, now in Peking as U.S. representative, was a former Chairman of the Republican National Committee.

Some American experts believe there will be no significant improvement in U.S.-China relations before 1977 because of leadership uncertainties in both countries. Real worry: In the meantime, relations between Washington and Peking could worsen.

Senator Henry Jackson, White House aspirant, has secretly asked his Senate investigating subcommittee to lie low for a while. The Washington State lawmaker was deeply embarrassed by his panel's "wild goose chase" for the body of missing former Teamster boss, James Hoffa.

British and Canadian spy agencies have demanded—and obtained—a written guarantee that no secrets they provide to the CIA under an exchange agreement will be revealed to U.S. congressional investigating committees.

President Ford is leaning, as a last resort, to simple extension of oil-price controls until after the 1976 election,

rather than let them expire on November 15. Blame for higher fuel prices is a heavier political burden than Mr. Ford wants to bear at this stage of his election campaign.

The public's disillusionment with Congress is making Senators increasingly skittish about missing votes. Absenteeism is averaging about 10.6 per cent this year, the best record since 1964. The average for the last 10 years has been 16 per cent.

Support from the Administration and Chairman Peter Rodino of the House Judiciary Committee is reviving proposals for a federal plan to compensate crime victims. The Senate, prodded by Democratic Leader Mike Mansfield, has passed such a bill several times, only to see it die in the House.

Insiders discount reports that President Ford will name Senator Hugh Scott, the Senate's G.O.P. Leader, as the next envoy to China. The reason: Pennsylvania's Governor Milton J. Shapp, a Democrat, almost certainly would appoint an anti-Ford man to succeed Mr. Scott.

Thousands of American servicemen and their families now qualify for food stamps, Pentagon pay studies show. Because few military families are aware of procedures for applying, some military bases have begun counseling them on the red tape involved.

Despite Detroit's efforts to win domination of the small-car market in the U.S., foreign manufacturers aren't giving up. A tiny diesel-powered auto from Volkswagen capable of 35 miles a gallon in stop-and-go city traffic may be introduced here next year.